

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

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NEW MANAGEMENT POSITION

The management staffs of Chicago's public housing projects now include a "Tenant Relations Counsellor" who is directly responsible to the Resident Housing Manager. His duties are: to handle future tenant selection for the project now filled, including checking new applications, re-applications and scoring; to take up tenant problems involving outside agencies, unemployment and domestic difficulties (in cases where residents are arrears in their rent it is the job of the Tenant Relations Counsellor to confer with the delinquent and recommend to the manager what action should be taken); to compile tenant statistics on applications, waiting lists, rentals and occupancy; to assume responsibility for tenant activities sponsored either by the management or by cooperating agencies, develop and guide programs designed to provide tenant education and leisure-time activities; to help volunteer leadership in tenant activities.

This is probably the first time that these various duties have been combined and placed under one person on the management staff of a public housing project. At the Jane Addams Houses, Eri Hulbert, who was formerly supervisor of tenant applications for that project, has been chosen for this position. He is a graduate of the University of Chicago and studied group work in the School of Social Service Administration. At Trumbull Park Homes the Tenant Relations Counsellor is Fred Henderson, a graduate of the George Williams College in Chicago, who has had a varied career in construction and settlement house work. For Julia C. Lathrop Homes the job is held by George Schermer, another graduate of the University of Chicago. He also has had positions with relief agencies including the WPA and NYA and has been in charge of boys' and men's social center activities.

NET INCOME DISCUSSED

The public meeting of the Committee on Housing Management, Citizens' Housing Council of New York, held in April, considered six major topics: 1) administrative organization; 2) the selection of a manager; 3) functions of the management job; 4) selection of tenants; 5) relation of management to tenantry; and 6) community activities. The Committee's report under these headings was presented by Abraham Goldfeld, Chairman; Heinz Norden, Vice-Chairman; Miss Louise Blackham and H. Robert Mandel.

In the discussion, particular emphasis was given to the importance of centralized administrative authority and the delegation of responsibility to resident housing managers; the value as well as the dangers of local advisory committees; the desirability of autonomous tenant organizations; and the development of community activities.

A member of the audience made the following pertinent statement:

"The Wagner-Steagall Act stipulates that the net income supersedes aggregate income, (in tenant selection) and that it may not exceed five times the amount of the monthly rental nor six times the amount where the family has three or more minor dependents. As far as I know, to date there has been no official ruling as to what constitutes net income.

"At this time I believe that this Committee should give some thought to what net income will constitute under this Act. We know that the Home Relief Bureau is cognizant of this situation and allows working children of Home Relief clients 60 per cent of their earnings and 40 per cent is budgeted to the family income. Therefore, I recommend that

this Committee take action and urge Administrator Nathan Straus to follow the procedure set by the Home Relief Bureau and at least allow not less than 50 per cent to the adult working son or daughter who has to meet car fares, luncheon, college tuition, recreation, savings towards marriage, and so forth, so that such families may not be penalized for moving into the housing project at the most crucial time of their lives when a decent, cheerful home is most necessary, simply because of a supposedly excess income that actually does not exist except in our imagination"

A TENANT'S VIEWPOINT

Knickerbocker News, a publication issued fortnightly by the Knickerbocker Village Tenants Association recently printed an item sent in by an anonymous contributor which deserves the serious attention of both architects and managers of future large-scale housing projects. The communication, appropriately headed "KV Panes and Pains" read as follows:

"While giving our windows their Easter polish I fell to figuring how much extra work the architect had let me in for when he turned his back on the regulation two-pane per window and gave us, not a total of eight but a total of sixty panes of glass for the four windows.

"Now, were these sixty panes as round as portholes, it would still be some job to keep them clean, but as every housewife knows, it's the corners that count and this is why it is about as easy to clean a glass four foot square as one four inches square.

"So, because an architect thought twelve to sixteen pieces of glass looked better than two to a window, I have not a mere sixty-four corners to negotiate every time they need cleaning, but a grand total of 480.

"This gives me a window-pain."

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TENANT ORIENTATION

A recent issue of "Home Made News," published for the tenants of Marshall Field Garden Apartment Homes, Chicago, includes a sheet of information called "Orientation Index." Some very useful items for tenants are listed, such as the full names and titles of the entire management personnel, the office hours of the administrative staff, various services furnished by the management concerning parcels, keys, repairs, laundry facilities, etc.

Other helpful information is given on storage facilities, use of dumb-waiters, emergencies, playground regulations, educational and recreational facilities for adults, etc. A column entitled "Several Ounces of Prevention" contains words of warning to tenants, such as: (1) don't allow children to play on the roof or unsupervised on the sun-decks; (2) keep parking space in front of every building free - blocking the entrance is a fire hazard; (3) notify office when you go on an extended vacation - apartment police will keep your home under close observation during your absence; (4) children should not enter basements alone - unsupervised play there is unsafe due to gas and electric appliances, the danger of being locked in rooms, the (remote) possibility of encountering intruders, etc.

A leaflet of this type distributed to residents is doubtless a great saver of time, energy and unnecessary verbal repetition for the management staff and a most helpful guide to new tenants.

UNIVERSITY RENTS CUT

As a result of a reduction in rent at University Homes, the government's \$706,000 slum clearance and low-rent housing project in Columbia, South Carolina, the development is now 100% rented. The reduction, which went into effect on April 1st, averaged about \$3 per dwelling unit for the 74 homes which comprise that section of the development occupied by Negro families. On that date, 20 of the dwellings were not occupied; only twelve days later all units were leased and there was a long waiting list.

The slash in University Terrace rents, which set the average cost of shelter for all the 122 dwellings in the project at \$4.50 per room per month, was ordered by Administrator Nathan Straus.

BOSTON AUTHORITY LEASES OLD HARBOR VILLAGE

Responsibility for the complete operation and management of Old Harbor Village in Boston, Massachusetts was assumed by the Boston Housing Authority on May 1st. On the same date tenants started moving into the 1,016 dwellings which are being rented at an average of \$22.70 for a unit with one bedroom to \$30.70 for a unit with three bedrooms. The average cost of shelter alone is \$4.90 per room per month. Gross rentals include charges for heat, hot water, electricity for lighting, cooking and refrigeration.

Old Harbor Village overlooks the scene of the historic Boston Tea Party. The three-story apartments and two-story group houses, grouped around open courts, are of fireproof brick and tile construction. Nearly 25 acres of the site are given over to 17 small, surfaced play areas, each equipped with low slides, swings and sand boxes for children of pre-school age, while a larger play area affords high slides and swings, a basketball court and horizontal bars for older children. Each kitchen is equipped with an electric cooking range and an electric refrigerator. The entire development is heated from a central plant.

Old Harbor Village provides unusual recreation and social facilities for both adults and children. Six recreation rooms provide ample space for club activities, sewing circles and group parties. Twelve other large assembly rooms provide rainy-day recreation space for children. John J. Meade is Manager of the development.

THE QUESTION BOX

With this issue we are initiating a question and answer column which will appear from time to time and will be devoted to a discussion of problems related exclusively to housing management. We hereby solicit pertinent questions from resident managers and other members of management staffs. We shall welcome statements of ideas and experience on these problems from readers.

On this first occasion we are presenting both the question and discussion but hereafter the questions will be given in one issue and the answers presented at a later date.



"Old Harbor Village"

Architectural Forum

The Question

A short time ago NAHO sent a brief letter of inquiry to local housing authorities operating large-scale projects:

Should childless families be admitted as tenants in public housing projects? If so, should they be strictly limited in number? What distinction, if any, should be made among different types of childless families; e.g., couples, both young and middle aged, without children; elderly couples whose children have moved away; childless couples with whom one of the parents is living as a dependent or as a self-supporting member of the family? On what general policy or line of reasoning do you base your answers to these and similar queries?

As a background to these questions it was pointed out that in selecting tenants for the projects that it leases from USHA, the Chicago Housing Authority encountered a little trouble in respect to admitting as tenants childless families. In the largest of the three projects under the Authority's management, about 60 per cent of the dwelling units are of three rooms. Contrary to the experience there and elsewhere in large-scale, limited-dividend projects there has been relatively less demand for the small units than for the 4 and 5 room apartments and houses.

In Chicago the Authority has proceeded on the general principle that the limited amount of new housing facilities under its control ought to be made to benefit as many young children as possible with due regard for the development of a rounded community life.

Childless families are now limited to ten per cent of the total number of units. Young childless couples are not admitted, but two-person families consisting of elderly persons or father or mother and one child are admitted. The only exceptions to this statement are young couples who can produce a doctor's certificate that a child is expected in the very near future.

A number of informative replies were received from which have been selected the excerpts given below. The two tables contain some interesting related data on family and apartment sizes that indicate some general trends in consumer demand for low-rent accommodations.

The Answers

1. "In Smithfield Court, (Birmingham, Alabama) our Low Rent Housing Project for Negroes, we have the following: 184 two room units; 260 three room units; 60 four room units and 40 five room units. Tenant selection began February 7th and all the four room units have been leased and occupied, a waiting list for four room units is now forming; the 60 five room units will all be leased within another week, we have twelve left right now but a number of applications for these in the mill; the two room units are least in demand. Total units leased to date, 210. (April 6, 1938)

"Our conclusion is this. Large families and lots of children should be encouraged instead of discouraged as is now the case. A limited number of small units should be provided for young couples who can reasonably be expected to have children; a small number of small units for old couples; no provision for couples who have been married for a number of years and who, most likely, will have no children.

"The substantial majority of all dwelling units in any low rent housing project should be of the five and four room type and a small number of six room units should be provided."

2. "A survey of the tenants now in LaSalle Place and College Court (Louisville, Kentucky) shows an extremely high percentage of two member families in three room units. (See table) Why this condition exists I will not be able to explain until all the applications for the two projects have been checked. I feel, however, that a study of the approximate 2,500 applications for the two projects will reveal a scarcity of applicants from eligible three member families."

3. "Relative to your query as to the selection of tenants relating to our 3-room apartments, (New Towne Court, Cambridge, Massachusetts) we have in all cases selected 95% of families which contained children; the other 5% consists of elderly couples who have been living in substandard areas, where it has been necessary to bring coal and wood up over the stairs, in some cases over three flights, working great hardships on these couples.

PRESENT OCCUPIED THREE-ROOM APARTMENTS - LOUISVILLE PROJECTS

College Court, Negro - 125 Units

Man and wife	38	65%
Man, wife and child (under school age)	12	20%
Parent and child (school age)	2	4%
Parent and child (under school age)	1	2%
Adult and aged dependent (two adults same sex)	3	5%
Man, wife and aged dependent	0	0
Man, wife and child (school age)	2	4%
	58	100%

LaSalle Place, White - 210 Units

Man and wife	33	39%
Man, wife and child (under school age)	43	51%
Parent and child (school age)	2	2%
Parent and child (under school age)	1	1%
Adult and aged dependent	4	5%
Two female adults	1	1%
Man, wife and aged dependent	1	1%
	85	100%

NUMBER OF FAMILIES APPLYING FOR APARTMENTS BY APARTMENT SIZE - NEW YORK CITY PROJECTS

Williamsburg Houses, White - 1,622 Units

Two rooms	4,433	25.9%
Three rooms	4,649	27.1%
Four rooms	5,773	33.7%
Five rooms	2,276	13.3%

Harlem River Houses, Negro - 574 Units

Two rooms	3,229	31.4%
Three rooms	2,449	23.8%
Four rooms	3,213	31.3%
Five rooms	1,388	13.5%

Next Question

Should tenants in large-scale housing developments be permitted to have dogs or other pets on the premises? Do you consider them objectionable or harmful to the property in any way? Would your answer differ if you were managing some other type of project?